

Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks in a Meeting With Nobel Laureates

November 18, 2002

It's my honor to welcome this year's Nobel laureates to the Oval Office. Of course, I welcome somebody who spent a lot of quality time here. President Carter and Mrs. Carter, we're so honored to have you as well as the other distinguished Americans who are here with us.

These Americans are a great honor to their fields and a great honor to our country. And we're proud to have you here. We're proud for what you've done, for not only America but the world. And we're proud for your contributions.

And I want to thank the Ambassadors from Sweden and Norway for coming here as well. Mr. Ambassadors, thank you for being here. All Americans take great pride in the accomplishments of these good folks. We'll be watching the news clips of the ceremonies. We will be with you there in spirit.

And once again, we thank you and your families for your dedication to the greatest country on the face of the Earth. And may God bless your work, and may God bless your further endeavors. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ambassadors to the U.S. Jan Eliasson of Sweden and Knut Vollebaek of Norway.

Interview With Czech Television

November 18, 2002

NATO's Role in the 21st Century

Q. Mr. President, this week in Prague, NATO will invite seven countries to join the Alliance. But there are other topics on the agenda, and the future of NATO is one of them. What do you see NATO will be doing in the 21st century? What is its role?

The President. Well, I think—first of all, I'm excited about going to Prague, and I want

to thank the citizens of that important city and the great country for their hard work in recovering from the floods and preparing Prague for our arrival.

This is going to be a historic meeting because, as you said, we're expanding NATO. The most important alliance America has is NATO, and the expansion of NATO is something that I think is very important.

The role of NATO is different as we go into the 21st century. NATO used to be a way to defend Europe from the Warsaw Pact. But the Warsaw Pact no longer exists. Russia is not an enemy. And we face new threats, and the new threats are global terror. And so one way to make sure NATO is relevant is to focus on the true threats to freedom, address those threats, and figure out ways that we can work together to accomplish what we want, which is a peaceful world, which means better intelligence-sharing, the capacity to cut off money, and a military operation that reflects the nature of the wars we'll be fighting. And that's going to be one of the most important discussions we face there in Prague.

Cooperation in the War on Terror

Q. Well, there are really big gaps between the war-fighting capabilities of NATO—of the United States, on one hand, and the European countries, on the other hand. And Lord Robertson is saying that the Americans are not always willing to share the technology necessary for NATO. Are you ready to participate on organization of European forces?

The President. Well, I think what has to happen is there first be a strategy that recognizes that the Czech Republic can provide a certain contribution or the French or the British—not the French but the Germans or the British can provide certain kind of capabilities—and that we dovetail each capability to an overall strategy. In which case, of course, America is willing to work with our friends and allies to make sure the NATO Alliance works properly.

In other words, everybody can contribute something. But it all has got to be done within the strategy of the true threats we face in the 21st century, which is global terrorism. That's the biggest threat to freedom right now.